

Message Text

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41

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 CU-02 EUR-12 IO-10 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

L-02 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /087 W

----- 039600

R 151120Z MAY 75

FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3906

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, SF

SUBJECT: PROPONENTS OF TRADE UNIONISM FOR BLACKS LOSING GROUND TO
ELEMENTS INCLINED TO SUPPORT SAG-IMPOSED COMMITTEE SYSTEM

CAPETOWN FOR EMBASSY

SUMMARY: 1. THUS FAR IN 1975 SEVERAL THINGS HAVE HAPPENED (OR FAILED
TO HAPPEN) WHICH SUGGEST THAT PROPONENTS OF TRADE UNIONISM FOR
BLACKS -- WHETHER RACIAL OR MULTIRACIAL -- HAVE BEEN LOSING GROUND
TO SUPPORTERS OF SAG-IMPOSED WORKS AND LIAISON COMMITTEE SYSTEM.

2. ITEM: IN JANUARY, DUE IN PART TO DEPRESSED CONDITIONS IN TEXTILE
INDUSTRY, THERE WAS NO RECURRENCE OF STRIKES WHICH CHARACTERIZED
DURBAN SCENE IN JANUARY 1973 AND 1974. THIS, TOGETHER WITH DRAMATIC
DOWNTURN IN MILITANT TRADE UNION ACTIVITY WHICH FOLLOWED DEPARTURE
OF HARRIET BOLTON IN DECEMBER, HAS ENCOURAGED FRAME GROUP (TEXTILE
MANUFACTURES) TO ENTER 1975 WAGE NEGOTIATIONS WITH OFFERS AS LOW
AS R6.90 PER WEEK FOR BEGINNING BLACK WORKERS IN BORDER AREAS.
TUCSA'S FEAR THAT POSITION OF TEXTILE WORKERS INDUSTRIAL UNION
SO WEAK IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES THAT SAG WILL EVENTUALLY HAVE TO
INTERVENE TO FORCE FRAME AND OTHERS TO PAY LIVING WAGES (THUS
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RENDERING TRADE UNION LARGELY IRRELEVANT).

3. ITEM: IN FEBRUARY, REPRESENTATIVES OF TUCSA, JOHANNESBURG-BASED URBAN TRAINING PROJECT (UTP), DURBAN-BASED INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION (IIE), ANGLO-AMERICAN, SOUTH AFRICAN BREWERIES AND OTHERS INCLUDING PROF S.P. CILLIERS OF STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY MET TO DISCUSS POSSIBILITIES OF SETTING UP MULTI-RACIAL NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS INSTITUTE WHICH WOULD UNDERTAKE TO PROVIDE JOINTLY-SPONSORED TRAINING FOR BOTH MANAGEMENT AND LABOR. GROUP APPOINTED CILLIERS CHAIRMAN OF STUDY COMMITTEE BUT TO DATE (3 MONTHS LATER) THERE HAVE BEEN FEW, IF ANY POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS.

4. ITEM: IN MARCH, TEN SOUTH AFRICAN EMPLOYERS ORGANIZATIONS (REPRESENTING ABOUT 90 PER CENT OF COUNTRY'S EMPLOYERS) JOINED IN SETTING UP "THE EMPLOYERS" CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON LABOUR AFFAIRS". IN APRIL, SAG ASKED THIS COMMITTEE TO EVALUATE WORKS AND LIAISON COMMITTEE SYSTEM. IN MAY, COMMITTEE SUBMITTED REPORT (STILL CONFIDENTIAL) WHICH WE UNDERSTAND EXPRESSES STRONG PREFERENCE FOR COMMITTEES OVER TRADE UNIONS ON GROUNDS THAT LATTER ARE BASICALLY POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS PATTERNED ON BRITISH TUC AND THEREFORE INAPPROPRIATE FOR BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

5. ITEM: SINCE APRIL, WHICH WAS FIRST MONTH IN WHICH UNREGISTERED BLACK UNIONS COULD APPLY FOR TUCSA MEMBERSHIP IN ACCORDANCE WITH AMENDMENT TO TUCSA CONSTITUTION APPROVED LAST SEPTEMBER, ONLY TWO OR THREE "PARALLEL" UNIONS HAVE RESPONDED WITH APPLICATIONS THUS FAR, NONE OF BLACK UNIONS ASSOCIATED WITH UTP OR IIE HAS BETRAYED ANY INTEREST WHATSOEVER IN JOINING TUCSA EVEN THOUGH ALL OF THEM URGENTLY NEED ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT TUCSA AND ITS CONSTITUENT UNIONS IN POSITION TO PROVIDE.

6. ITEM: EVEN THOUGH INSTITUTE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT (IPM) HAS LONG BEEN MAKING LIBERAL-SOUNDING STATEMENTS ABOUT COOPERATING WITH TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN TRAINING FIELD (AND WILL ACTIVELY JOIN TUCSA IN SPONSORING FIRST OF PROPOSED SERIES OF 3-DAY JOINT COURSES IN JUNE) AND EVEN THOUGH THEME OF IPM'S FORTHCOMING NATIONAL CONVENTION (SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 4-6 IN CAPE TOWN) IS "THE TRAINING CHALLENGE", CONVENTION PROGRAM CONTAINS NO REFERENCE WHATSOEVER TO TRADE UNION PROGRAMS. IT DEVOTES TIME ONLY TO DISCUSSION OF "LIAISON COMMITTEE TRAINING".

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7. ITEM: IN MEANTIME, DURING RECENT HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY DEBATE LABOUR MINISTER VILJOEN POINTED WITH APPARENT PRIDE AND SATISFACTION TO FACT THAT COUNTRY NOW CONTAINS ALMOST 2,000 WORKS AND LIAISON COMMITTEES REPRESENTING OVER 550,000 BLACK WORKERS.

8. COMMENT: IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT, IN ABSENCE OF TRADE UNION DYNAMISM AND UNITY, AND GIVEN LULL WHICH HAS OCCURRED IN BLACK

STRIKE ACTION DURING RECENT MONTHS, SOUTH AFRICAN ESTABLISHMENT
(INCLUDING IMPORTANT SEGMENTS OF "LIBERAL" ESTABLISHMENT) HAS
JUST ABOUT DECIDED TO GO ALONG WITH SAG'S INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
SYSTEM FOR BLACKS (AT LEAST UNTIL NEXT SERIOUS OUTBREAK OF
BLACK INDUSTRIAL UNREST).
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